



Middle East Monitor

The Latest from the Middle East

Palestinians will pay the price for Israel's early election

Dr. Daud Abdullah, Friday, 12 October 2012 15:00

In most countries, elections are purely internal affairs. In Israel, though, things are different; elections often have horrible consequences for the Palestinians living under the brutal Israeli occupation. The election in early 2013 will be no different.

Reacting to Benjamin Netanyahu's announcement of an early election, veteran Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat admitted that they may have to pay the price. This, he explained, will probably entail an escalation of settler attacks, further expansion of settlements and another full-scale onslaught on the Gaza Strip. Israeli politicians thrive on malevolence toward the Palestinians.

In reality, such escalation has already started. In Jerusalem, settler incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque have now become a daily spectacle. Their calls to divide Islam's third holiest mosque have become increasingly loud and audacious. Equally, with the onset of the olive harvest, Palestinians across the occupied West Bank are confronted with the systematic theft of their crops and destruction of ancient trees. As for Gaza, the worst is yet to come.

Despite efforts by the Hamas administration to keep the peace, Israel has in recent days carried out a number of bombing raids on the territory. To many they appear to be a dress rehearsal for the type of aggression carried out in December 2008, weeks before Israel's previous general election.

There is nothing extraordinary about an early poll in Israel. Although the law allows for a four-year term, the average life of an Israeli government is just two years. The current parliament is due to end in October 2013.

While making the announcement, the Prime Minister accused his coalition partners of putting party interests before that of the country, a clear reference to the opposition he encountered to his proposed budget. In fact, each party is trying to feather its own nest. Thus, rather than allow the budget to be brought before the Knesset and defeated, Netanyahu decided on an early election.

Given the tensions within the ruling coalition, the Prime Minister is taking a gamble not only on remaining in office, but also on tightening his grip on power. This would give him greater freedom to make decisions consistent with his right-wing, pro-settler agenda.

If there is any credit to be given to Benjamin Netanyahu, it is the fact that he has lasted this long in office. As a result, he is confident that his Likud Party will gain more seats. Opinion polls in Israel suggest he is in a fairly unassailable position. Although there are reports that former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is considering a comeback, his chances are slim. His wars in Lebanon (2006) and Gaza two years later, both failed to achieve their military and political objectives. Israelis usually elect those who have a record of military success.

In the absence of a powerful challenger, as most Israeli media analysts assert, the incumbent believes his is the best course of action. The main opposition, Labour and Kadima, it seems, will not be ready to face the electorate in a month or two.

Thus, even with his dismally poor record Netanyahu remains the front-runner. After taking office in 2009, the Prime Minister espoused a culture of profligacy, lavishing state funds on the settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories and ignoring demands for affordable housing within Israel. His failure to engage in negotiations with the Palestinians was largely attributed to the settlement expansion campaign, which ultimately reinforced Israel's international isolation. Netanyahu's catalogue of political blundering was compounded further by his failure to persuade Barack Obama to launch a joint US-Israel attack on Iran after years of sabre rattling.

As things stand, Netanyahu will try to provoke a crisis to highlight the "security threat" to Israel and then respond in a manner sufficiently robust to convince voters that he is the best man to protect the nation's interests. Since he is evidently afraid to launch a unilateral attack on Iran, the nearest and softest alternative has to be Gaza.

Israeli officials believe that they can get away with such an operation. Of late, they have been warning that an attack on Gaza of the ferocity of Operation Cast Lead is inevitable. They contend that the new Egyptian administration is sympathetic to the Hamas-led administration in the beleaguered territory and that it has reneged on agreements signed with the Mubarak regime to protect Israel's interests. Thus, while the Egyptians are still preoccupied with their own internal

security, especially in the Sinai, this is presumably the best time to launch a full-scale assault on Gaza to restore Israel's "deterrent" status.

For their part, the resistance groups in Gaza have, during this past week, shown that they are prepared to respond, with or without the support and approval of Egypt. That in itself makes the current situation extremely volatile.

According to retired Egyptian General Ta'alat Musallam the Israelis would like to test the missile capability of the Palestinian resistance and find out whether they have the ability to reach every major city in Israel and

not just targets in the south of the country. While they admit that they cannot eradicate the resistance, the Israelis would at least try to destroy their missile storage facilities, launch pads and production lines.

The gradual and calculated escalation that will precede the Israeli election could all go terribly wrong and extend well beyond the Gaza Strip. The region is heading for a long, hot winter.

<http://www.middleeastmonitor.com/resources/commentary-and-analysis/4447-palestinians-will-pay-the-price-for-israels-early-election>

'Police fail to prosecute Palestinian trees vandalism'



Human rights group says 162 complaints filed by Palestinians over alleged orchard vandalism by settler last seven years have yielded only one indictment

The Yesh Din – Volunteers for Human Rights group leveled harsh criticism at the Judea and Samaria District Police Thursday, saying the department is failing to prosecute cases of vandalism against Palestinian orchards in the West Bank.

According to a report by the group, released following the beginning of the olive-picking season, the 162 complaints filed by Palestinians over the past seven years – mostly against settlers – have so far yielded only one indictment.

Related stories:

[Palestinians say settlers uprooted 200 olive trees](#)

[Palestinian: Settlers uprooted 120 trees](#)

['Settlers uproot trees, police take no notice'](#)

The complaints detail acts of damaging trees, uprooting them, cutting them down and stilling the produce, Yesh Din said.

The majority of complaints entail damage done to olive groves across the West Bank, but some detail damage to fruit orchards as well.

According to the report, 124 of the cases were dismissed on grounds of "felon unknown"; 16 cases were dismissed over insufficient evidence; two cases were dismissed over "lack of criminal liability" and the reason for the dismissal of five other cases were not released. The police told Yesh Din that files concerning two of the complaints were lost.

The Judea and Samaria District Police said in response that, "The report compiled by Yesh Din has yet to be received by the police. It will be reviewed and we will respond to it accordingly."

Yesh Din's report further criticizes the police for also failing to enforce the law and deal with what the group defines as "Ideological offences by Israeli citizens against Palestinians in the West Bank."

According to the group, less than 9% of all active cases resulted in any kind of legal action. "The police's failure to enforce the law encourages such acts of vandalism, since the perpetrators are not punished."

<http://theuglytruth.wordpress.com/2012/10/12/police-fail-to-prosecute-palestinian-trees-vandalism/>

ADL quits interfaith dialogue following churches' letter on Israel aid

October 11, 2012

(JTA) -- The Anti-Defamation League withdrew from participating in a national Jewish-Christian interfaith dialogue after church leaders asked Congress to reevaluate U.S. military aid to Israel.

The ADL in a statement called the request "a serious breach of trust by mainline Protestant Church leaders" participating in the annual interfaith meeting, which will be held on Oct. 22.

The religious leaders from the Lutheran, Methodist and United Church of Christ churches, and the National Council of Churches sent a letter to Congress members on Oct. 8 calling for an investigation into possible violations by Israel of the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act and the U.S. Arms Export Control Act. The violations would make Israel ineligible for U.S. military aid.

The letter also decried what it called "a troubling and consistent pattern of disregard by the government of Israel for U.S. policies that support a just and lasting peace," citing Israel's failure to halt settlement activity despite repeated U.S. government requests.

"In light of the failure of any of the church leaders to reach out to us, we have decided not to attend this interfaith meeting," said Abraham Foxman, ADL's

national director. "The blatant lack of sensitivity by the Protestant dialogue partners we had been planning to meet with has seriously damaged the foundation for mutual respect, which is essential for meaningful interfaith dialogue."

"It is outrageous that mere days after the Iranian president repeated his call for Israel's elimination, these American Protestant leaders would launch a biased attack against the Jewish state by calling on Congress to investigate Israel's use of foreign aid. In its clear bias against Israel, it is striking that their letter fails to also call for an investigation of Palestinian use of U.S. foreign aid, thus once again placing the blame entirely on Israel."

Foxman called on other Jewish organizations to "understand the level of disrespect the American Jewish community is being shown here" and to also withdraw from the conference.

<http://www.jta.org/news/article/2012/10/11/3108991/adl-withdraws-from-interfaith-dialogue-after-letter-to-congress>

Wagner and Me

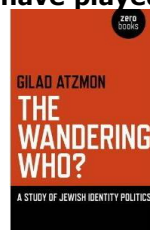
Gilad Atzmon , Friday, October 12, 2012 at 9:09AM

Yesterday I came across this hilarious JC's "news item" Rogue note at Klezmer bash, September 21, 2012, <http://www.thejc.com> Regent's Park annual klezmer celebration had the crowds rocking to the sounds of the shtetl.



But one visitor could not believe his ears when he heard a presenter announce a piece of music this year by Gilad Atzmon. The notorious Israeli jazz musician and self-styled "self-hating" Jew did not actually perform at Klezmer in the Park: one of his tracks was broadcast between live acts.

After a complaint, a spokesman for the event's organisers, the Jewish Music Institute, said they had not been aware of Atzmon's views but "I'm sure we would not have played it if we had."



<http://www.gilad.co.uk/writings/wagner-and-me.html>

A good question about American interests in the Middle East but what is the answer?

By Alan Hart

In an article for Tom Dispatch, Peter Van Buren (a U.S. Foreign Service Officer for many years) posed what he described as Six Critical Foreign Policy Questions That Won't Be Raised in Presidential Debates. Question three was under the headline – **What do we want from the Middle East?**

The preamble to the specific question was this: "Is it all about oil? Israel? Old-fashioned hegemony and containment? What is our goal in fighting an intensifying proxy war with Iran, newly expanded into cyberspace? Are we worried about a nuclear Iran, or just worried about a new nuclear club member in

general? Will we continue the nineteenth century game of supporting thug dictators who support our policies in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Libya (until overwhelmed by events on the ground), and opposing the same actions by other thugs who disagree with us like Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Syria's Bashar al-Assad? That kind of policy thinking did not work out too well in the long run in Central and South America, and history suggests that we should make up our mind on what America's goals in the Middle East might actually be. No cheating now – having no policy is a policy of its own."

Then the specific question:

"Candidates, can you define America's predominant interest in the Middle East and sketch out a series of at least semi-sensical actions in support of it?"

In my view the honest answer (which won't come from the lips of President Obama or Mitt Romney) is something like the following.

The U.S. has always had two predominant interests in the Middle East. The first was guaranteeing the flow of oil at the lowest possible price even when that meant supporting corrupt and repressive Arab regimes which would do America's bidding. (Saudi Arabia's King Faisal, in my view the first and the last truly great Arab leader of modern times, was assassinated because he was no longer willing to be an American puppet, a fact he demonstrated by, among other things, defying Henry Kissinger with his support for Arafat and the PLO).

The second was to do with the fact that the Military Industrial Complex in all of its manifestations is the biggest single creator of jobs and wealth in America. It not only needed wars to guarantee the flow of tax dollars into its coffers, it also needed very wealthy Arab client states to buy its products. (In 2011 U.S. weapons sales reached a record high of \$66 billion. America's largest customer was Saudi Arabia, which purchased more than \$33bn worth of weapons from the U.S. including dozens of F-15 fighter jets and missiles. The Obama administration proudly said that this deal alone would be a major stimulus to the U.S. economy and generate 75,000 new jobs. The United Arab Emirates and Oman also spent billions on buying American weapons).

In the last decade or two of the 20th century the U.S. has had a third predominant interest in the Middle East, It was having in power Arab regimes which were prepared to spend big amounts of the wealth of their countries on keeping the American economy going, and quite possibly preventing it from collapsing, by buying American debt. This purchase of U.S. debt instruments (paper promises) enabled Americans to go on living beyond their means and helped to create a national debt which is now approaching \$17 trillion. (The other two major purchasers of American debt were Japan and China).

The second part of Van Buren's specific question asked the candidates to outline some actions they would take to support American interests in the Middle East.

We know how the neo-cons (Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of Israel right or wrong) would respond to that question if they were honest. They'd say, "We need more wars."



Van Buren mentioned Israel only once and with a question mark. In my analysis Israel has been and continues to be a predominant American interest in the Middle East for two related reasons.

One is the ignorance of the vast majority of Americans. I mean ignorance in the sense that they have been conditioned to believe a version of history, Zionism's version, which is a pack of propaganda lies. The consequence is that they, the vast majority of Americans, have no understanding of what the conflict is really all about, who the real victims are and why it is not in America's own best interests to go on supporting Israel (the oppressor) right or wrong.

The related reason is that this ignorance has made it easy for the Zionist lobby, through its stooges in Congress, to call the shots for policy on the Israel-Palestine conflict.

I am in no doubt that Obama, unlike Romney, is completely aware that the biggest real threat to America's own best interests in the Middle East (and the whole of the wider Muslim world) is the Zionist state, on account of the anger and the despair provoked by a combination of its contempt for international law and arrogance of power, and America's lack of will to call and hold the Zionist monster to account for its crimes.

If I was in the audience for the next for the next presidential debate, the question I would want to put to Obama and Romney is this: **Do you believe it is in America's own best interests to go on supporting Israel right or wrong?**

If the answer was "No", the follow-up question would have to be: **In order to best protect America's own interests, will you be prepared to take whatever action is necessary to require Israel to end its defiance of international law?**

<http://www.alanhart.net/a-good-question-about-american-interests-in-the-middle-east-but-what-is-the-answer/>

A REMINDER - New DVD RELEASE 28th June 2012

'DRESDEN HOLOCAUST 1946: Why an apology to Germany is due'

As Queen Elizabeth II opens a memorial to the 55,000 members of the Royal Air Force Bomber Command who died during the Second World War, increasing numbers of Britons are questioning the history and legacy of that conflict. The political leaders (principally Prime Minister Winston Churchill) who sent those men of Bomber Command to their deaths – as well as condemning 500,000 German civilians to be burned alive across sixty towns and cities that were devastated in a deliberate bombing strategy – are now seen by some as war criminals.

Moreover the influence of these criminal policies can be seen in the approach of today's Washington-London-Jerusalem axis, with American and British bombers again sent into foreign skies to terrorize civilians, in pursuit of an alien agenda that does nothing to enhance the security of the USA or the UK.

Telling Films has produced a new DVD which calls the criminal politicians to account and sets the record straight. In the process the film celebrates the small but significant group of influential Britons who even during the Second World War condemned the terror bombing policy.

This heroic band of true beacons of justice included George Bell, Bishop of Chichester; Lord Hankey, founding father of the 20th century British government machinery; Sir Charles Snow, government scientist and author; and the Rt. Hon. Richard Stokes MP, England's leading Roman Catholic politician of the 1940s, a socialist patriot who combined his condemnation of

terror bombing with insights into the insidious threat of international usury, communist expansion and Zionist subversion.

Entitled Dresden Holocaust 1945: An Apology to Germany is due, the new Telling Films DVD combines archive material and footage from the 1940s; new film of a Dresden anniversary commemoration outside the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey; and commentary from veteran political activist Richard Edmonds, peace campaigner Dr James Thring and documentary producer and free debate defender Lady Michèle Renouf.

Chapter Two of the DVD is Richard Stokes: Socialist Patriot, Opponent of Terror Bombing and Defender of Palestine: an address given in London by political analyst and broadcaster Peter Rushton, assistant editor of Heritage and Destiny. Mr Rushton sets Stokes's courageous statements opposing the Churchill government's bombing campaign in the context of his religious and political views, including attempts at a negotiated peace in 1939-40 and Stokes's involvement in the notorious Tyler Kent affair, when an American cypher clerk was imprisoned for threatening to disclose Winston Churchill's secret communications with President Roosevelt.

The DVD Dresden Holocaust 1945 is dedicated to the publisher Tony Hancock - 1947-2012.

For order and distribution details please contact TELLING FILMS at dvdorders@tellingfilms.co.uk

smh.com.au
The Sydney Morning Herald

The Indian obsession with fairer skin sinks to a new low

Amrit Dhillon, May 23, 2012 - 12:38PM

THE Indian obsession with fair skin has always been a distasteful phenomenon. The fairness cream industry is gigantic, with men as well as women lathering these silly potions on their faces to make their skin a few shades lighter. Pregnant women in rural areas believe they will give birth to light-skinned babies if they consume lots of "white" dairy products such as milk, cream, yoghurt, and butter. Dark models and actresses struggle for work as their skin isn't regarded as desirable.

Now an Indian company has taken this bizarre self-hating obsession to a new level with a "feminine" hygiene product that not only promises to keep a woman's genitalia "fresh" but also lighten the skin around the vagina. The television ad for Clean & Dry Intimate Wash shows an attractive, modern woman sitting at home looking wistful. Her partner (presumably her husband) is in the same room and seems to be ignoring her.

The next scene shows her in the shower, where a piece of animation shows the unsightly brown hue around her crotch (blurred mercifully) giving way to a lighter flesh colour. In the next scene, the partner is far more interested in her and the newly confident woman, now in shorts and looking flirtatious, grabs his car keys, puts them in her pocket and invites him to give chase. He responds by lifting her into his arms lovingly. Clearly all is well between them now that her vagina is lighter skinned. Online, the advert reads: "Life for women will now be fresher, cleaner and more importantly fairer and more intimate."

This fairness mania maddens me. If some Jews used to suffer self-hatred, at least you knew it was because previous generations had undergone persecution for centuries. If some African Americans used to have low esteem and tried to lighten their skin and straighten their hair, at least you knew that a history of slavery

must have cast a shadow on their confidence. But what can explain this Indian hatred of the colour of their own skin? Yes, I know that the British Raj was white, but Mughal rule in India lasted much longer and the Mughals were not white, so the "colonial complex" theory doesn't quite do the job.

If the theory were correct, Indians would hanker after slanted eyes as the Mughals were Mongols from Central Asia, but Indians refer to their own people from the north-east disparagingly as "chinky-eyed".

What is so repugnant about this product is that it is guilty of a double self-hatred - of race and gender. Indian women should be ashamed of their dark skin and, as women, should be ashamed of genitalia that is dark and, presumably, unappealing.

In the West a couple of decades ago, companies tried to peddle a nefarious vaginal spray to keep a woman's private parts fresh. Doctors and feminists pointed out that a daily shower or bath was all a woman needed to be fresh. In any case, why did the man not need sprays to keep his organ fragrant? And why has no one manufactured a "skin-tightening" product to improve the turkey giblets look of male genitalia?

Mercifully, the Indian product has become controversial and Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni (a woman), has asked the Advertising and Standards Council of India to ban it.

Women's groups have been outraged and vocal about the product. As one woman wrote online: "This is the ultimate insult - skin whitening for your vagina."

But I wonder how it got this far? You wonder why the advertising team had no doubts about it.

Why no one at the company wondered if such a product was insulting to women. Why the actor and the actress in the ad failed to realise that the idea they were peddling was noxious.

It's bad enough that fairness cream ads make it seem as though a dark-skinned woman will never have a career or get a husband until she is fairer. But to sell something which is so utterly misogynistic - that hoary stuff that feminism had to fight, about female genitalia somehow being dirty and repulsive, which is why European art for centuries showed women with no pubic hair - shows an astounding degree of ignorance about how the world has moved on from such backward notions.

It is really time for Indians to change their attitude towards their own skin. Just as African Americans launched a Black is Beautiful campaign in the US, so India needs a similar self-affirming movement. Fast.

Amrit Dhillon is a freelance journalist based in New Delhi.

<http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/the-indian-obsession-with-fairer-skin-sinks-to-a-new-low-20120522-1z300.html>

Töben says: 'Don't blame the Jews for this sickness, blame the Germans for bending to their pressure...'

Nazi legacy: The troubled descendants

By Frances Cronin BBC News, 23 May 2012 Last updated at 00:32 GMT



Amon Goeth's daughter Monika only learned the true extent of her father's war crimes when she watched the film *Schindler's List*

The names of Himmler, Goering, Goeth and Hoess still have the power to evoke the horrors of Nazi Germany, but what is it like to live with the legacy of those surnames, and is it ever possible to move on from the terrible crimes committed by your ancestors?

When he was a child Rainer Hoess was shown a family heirloom. He remembers his mother lifting the heavy lid of the fireproof chest with a large swastika on the lid, revealing bundles of family photos. They featured his father as a young child playing with his brothers and sisters, in the garden of their grand family home.

The photos show a pool with a slide and a sand pit - an idyllic family setting - but one that was separated from the gas chambers of Auschwitz by just a few yards. It

was where his grandmother told the children to wash the strawberries they picked because they smelled of ash from the concentration camp ovens.

His grandfather Rudolf Hoess (not to be confused with Nazi deputy leader Rudolf Hess), was the first commandant of Auschwitz concentration camp. His father grew up in a villa adjoining the camp, where he and his siblings played with toys built by prisoners.



Rainer Hoess's father (c) plays in a sand pit in the family villa with a gate (r) that leads into Auschwitz

Rainer is haunted by the garden gate he spotted in the photos that went straight into the camp - he calls it the "gate to hell. It's hard to explain the guilt," says Rainer, "even though there is no reason I should bear any guilt, I still bear it. I carry the guilt with me in my mind. I'm ashamed too, of course, for what my family, my grandfather, did to thousands of other families. So you ask yourself, they had to die. I'm alive. Why am I alive?"

To carry this guilt, this burden, to try to come to terms with it. That must be the only reason I exist, to do what he should have done."

His father never abandoned the ideology he grew up with and Rainer no longer has contact with him, as he attempts to cope with his family's guilt and shame.

For Katrin Himmler, putting pen to paper was her way of coping with having Heinrich Himmler in her family.

"It's a very heavy burden having someone like that in the family, so close. It's something that just keeps hanging over you."

Himmler, key architect of the Holocaust, was her great-uncle, and her grandfather and his other brother were also in the Nazi party.

She wrote *The Himmler Brothers: A German Family History*, in a quest to "bring something positive" to the name of Himmler.

"I did my best to distance myself from it and to confront it critically. I no longer need to be ashamed of this family connection."



Schindler's List featured Amon Goeth as a major character

She says the descendants of the Nazi war criminals seem to be caught between two extremes.

"Most decide to cut themselves off entirely from their parents so that they can live their lives, so that the story doesn't destroy them.

"Or they decide on loyalty and unconditional love and sweep all the negative things away."

She says they all face the same question: "Can you really love them if you want to be honest and really know what they did or thought?"

Katrin thought she had a good relationship with her father until she started to research into the family's past. Her father found it very hard to talk about it.

"I could only understand how difficult it was for him when I realised how difficult it was for me to accept that my own grandmother was a Nazi.

"I really loved her, I was fond of her, it was very difficult when I found her letters and learned that she maintained contact with the old Nazis and that she sent a package to a war criminal sentenced to death. It made me feel sick."

Trying to find out exactly what happened in her family's past was hard for Monika Hertwig. She was a baby when her father Amon Goeth was tried and hanged for killing tens of thousands of Jews.

Goeth was the sadistic commander of Plaszow concentration camp, but Monika was brought up by her mother as if the horrors had never happened.

As a child she created a rose-tinted version of her father from family photos.

"I had this image I created [that] the Jews in Plaszow and Amon were one family."



Bettina Goering chose to be sterilised to ensure the family name did not continue

But in her teens she questioned this view of her father and confronted her mother, who eventually admitted her father "may have killed a few Jews".

When she repeatedly asked how many, her mother "became like a madwoman" and whipped her with an electric cable.

It was the film *Schindler's List* that brought home the full horror of her father's crimes.

Goeth was played by Ralph Fiennes and Monika says watching it "was like being struck".

"I kept thinking this has to stop, at some point they have to stop shooting, because if it doesn't stop I'll go crazy right here in this theatre."

She left the cinema suffering from shock.

For Bettina Goering, the great-niece of Hitler's designated successor Hermann Goering, she felt she needed to take drastic action to deal with her family's legacy. Both she and her brother chose to be sterilised.

"We both did it... so that there won't be any more Goerings," she explains. "When my brother had it done, he said to me 'I cut the line'."

Disturbed by her likeness to her great-uncle, she left Germany more than 30 years ago and lives in a remote home in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"It's easier for me to deal with the past of my family from this great distance," she explains.

While Bettina decided to travel far from the site of her relatives' crimes, Rainer Hoess decided he had to visit the heart of his family's shame - Auschwitz.

As a child he was not allowed on school trips to Auschwitz because of his surname, but as an adult in his forties, he felt the need to face "the reality of the horror and the lies I've had all these years in my family".

Seeing his father's childhood home he broke down and kept repeating the word "insanity".

"It's insane what they built here at the expense of others and the gall to say it never happened."

He could not speak when he saw the "gate to hell". In the visitors centre he encountered the raw emotion of descendants of camp victims.



Zvika, holocaust survivor, embraces Rainer Hoess

One young Israeli girl broke down as she told him his grandfather had exterminated her family - she could not believe he had chosen to face them.

As Rainer spoke about his guilt and shame, a former Auschwitz prisoner at the back of the room asked if he could shake his hand.

They embraced as Zvika told Rainer how he gives talks to young people, but tells them the relatives are not to blame as they were not there.

For Rainer this was a major moment in dealing with the burden of his family's guilt.

"To receive the approval of someone who survived those horrors and knows for sure that it wasn't you, that you didn't do it.

"For the first time you don't feel fear or shame but happiness, joy, inner joy."

Hitler's Children is on BBC Two Wednesday 23 May 21:00 BST. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-18120890>

Vienna to erect downtown memorial honouring those who deserted from Hitler's army

By The Associated Press, October 12, 2012

VIENNA - Vienna's municipal officials say the city has settled on a downtown site in front of the Austrian chancellor's office as the place for a memorial honouring those who deserted from Hitler's army.

The decision to put up such a monument was made months ago but organizations involved in its realization could not settle on a location.

The choice of the Ballhausplatz square was announced Friday by officials of Vienna's Socialist-Green coalition government.

It will be the first such memorial in Austria, which was annexed by Nazi Germany in 1938 — a move supported by the overwhelming majority of citizens back then.

<http://www.theprovince.com/news/Vienna+erect+downtown+memorial+honouring+those+deserted+from+Hitlers/7380899/story.html>

VATICAN INSIDER

LASTAMPA.it

Bishop Shomali's disparaging statements on Talmud are disturbing to friends of Christian-Jewish dialogue

LISA PALMIERI-BILLIG, ROME, 7 OCTOBER 2012

Jewish and Catholic scholars are upset over the affirmations of the Vicar General of Jerusalem's Latin Patriarch in a recent Famiglia Cristiana interview

Those who know and respect monsignor William Shomali, the Auxiliary Bishop and Vicar General of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, were surprised and disturbed by his declarations on the Talmud and on Israeli education in the September 30 issue of *Famiglia Cristiana*. Commenting on recent episodes of vandalism against Christian holy places by Jewish extremists, he claimed "hatred of Christians" was taught in Israeli schools and the Talmud itself.

"The Talmud, the holy book studied by the ultra-orthodox, more highly venerated than the Bible itself, invites religious hatred, speaks badly of Jesus, and even worse of Mary and, in general, of Christians" he said, adding that *"in Israeli schools love for the other is not taught but rather the destruction of the other"*.

These blanket, defamatory generalizations produced consternation in Israeli political representatives, Jewish religious authorities and friends engaged in interreligious dialogue. While unanimously condemning the criminal

acts committed by a small group of Jewish extremists and "hoodlums" against Christian sites, and calling for action to apprehend the culprits and impede recurrence, they strongly objected to the content of Bishop Shomali's assertions.

Rabbi David Rosen, the Jerusalem based International Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee sought firstly, to correct Bishop Shomali's misconception of the role of the Talmud in Jewish life.

"Contrary to the age old canard that has been popular among those Christians who have denigrated Judaism over the centuries" he says, "the Talmud is not 'more highly venerated than the Bible itself' and it is not even a 'holy' book for Jews' but rather the all- important compendium of commentaries and debates on the principles and precepts of the Bible and the traditions expounding the latter."

Regarding Bishop Shomali's accusations against the Israeli educational system, Rabbi Rosen says that "While there is much that needs to be done to educate about other religions in Israeli schools ... it is a totally unjustified defamation to claim that Israel's schools teach 'the destruction of the other.' "

Israel's Ambassador to the Holy See, Zion Evrony, also points out that "Monsignor Shomali's claim that in Israeli schools 'love for the other' is not taught but rather the 'destruction of the other' is totally false and misleading. The values of human rights, respect for the other and tolerance are central themes in the Israeli educational system. The way to solving problems is only through education and mutual understanding, not through building new hate...As opposed to the situation in most Countries of the Middle East, Christians in Israel live safely, practice their religion freely and their number is increasing."



Bishop Shomali

Rev. Joseph Sievers, Professor of Jewish History and Literature of the Hellenistic Period at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, says "This characterization of the Talmud as reported in 'Famiglia Cristiana' is incorrect and truly unfortunate." He recalls however that educational problems do exist, referring to a recent, more nuanced statement issued by the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land expressing "grave concern about the education of the young in some schools where contempt and intolerance are taught". He points to the path he hopes will be chosen by citing another Vatican document (Notes on the correct way to present the Jews and Judaism in preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church) "...Our two traditions are so related that they cannot ignore each other. Mutual knowledge must be encouraged at every level...."

Rabbi Rosen comments, "I do not deny that there is prejudice among Jews towards Christians and Christianity. However, this prejudice is the result of the tragic experience of persecution and prejudice that Jews experienced at the hand of Christians over the ages. I deeply regret that such prejudice remains and unreservedly condemn an act of disrespect to Christians, their places of worship and their beliefs. Such actions are a desecration of the Divine Name and in fact insult

Judaism even more than Christianity. However it is important to understand where this animosity really comes from and not to avoid that truth by conjuring false scapegoats or regurgitating old prejudices."

Rome's Chief Rabbi, Dr. Riccardo Di Segni finds that Bishop Shomali's statements regarding Israeli schools are "reminiscent of a pre-Vatican II attitude towards Judaism we had hoped no longer exists", in which "love" in the New Testament was falsely set against "legalism" as characterizing the Jewish Bible – or "Old Testament." "They are very disturbing proclamations, and contrary to the principles governing our contemporary dialogue" agrees Dr. Luigi De Salvia, President of "Religions for Peace/Italy", recalling the directives of the Vatican document "Guidelines and Suggestions for implementing the Conciliar Declaration, 'Nostra Aetate, N.4' " which state among other things "...The Old Testament and the Jewish Tradition founded upon it must not be set against the New Testament in such a way that the former seems to constitute a religion of only justice, fear, and legalism, with no appeal to love of God and neighbor...."

"Hopefully these words will be rescinded or clarified" Dr. De Salvia concludes. Regarding the Talmud's alleged and disputed references that might or might not pertain to Jesus, both Jewish and Christian experts concord they are still open to contrasting interpretations.

Rabbi Rosen points out, "There is difference of opinion among scholars as to whether the few references in the Talmud that have been attributed to refer to Jesus of Nazareth are in fact just that. The Talmud was not written under Christian Rule but in the main under Babylonian rule, and thus there are few references at all to Christians" he says.

Prof. Sievers, citing the thesis of Peter Schaefer in 'Jesus in the Talmud', says these passages "were subject to Christian censorship and may best be understood in the context of Christian-Jewish polemics of late antiquity."

Rome's Chief Rabbi warns that in any case, "we must keep a sense of proportion. The material to which Bishop Shomali might be referring occupies, in all, 2 – 3 pages out of a total of 2,700. They are Haggadic narrative, enigmatic and confused, and it is quite unlikely that they refer to Christians. Numerous Christian scholarly studies, including Italian sources, have cast serious doubt that these sentences are about Jesus or Christians. They bear no normative authority and have been used over the centuries as pretexts for the burning of Talmuds."

"We must contextualize", continues Rome's Chief Rabbi. "A serious and valid interreligious dialogue necessitates taking historical evolution into account in textual interpretations."

"Excessively literal interpretations of the Gospels and Patristic texts, for example, spread hatred and anti-Judaism for hundreds of years, instigating anti-Semitism and violence against Jews."

<http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/homepage/world-news/detail/articolo/jewish-catholic-18721/>

NON-AGENDA

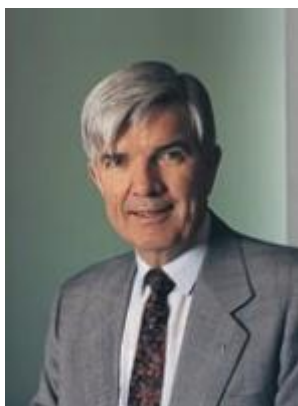
With the view of causing an increase to take place in the mass of national wealth, or with a view to increase of the means either of subsistence or enjoyment, without some special reason, the general rule is, that nothing ought to be done or attempted by government. The motto, or watchword of government, on these occasions, ought to be □ Be quiet...Whatever measures, therefore, cannot be justified as exceptions to that rule, may be considered as non-agenda on the part of government.

Jeremy Bentham - c.1801

Dumbing Down: Some Thoughts on a Phrase of our Time

Don Aitkin, *Agenda*, Volume 9, Number 1, 2002, pages 87-96

Dumbing down has a fine ring to it, the result of percussive alliteration reinforced with energetic direction. The term has interested me for some time, partly because of its novelty, partly because I wondered what had brought it forth, and partly because intuitively I rejected what I thought was its message. What follows is an essay on these themes, with a commentary on what seems to me to have happened in Australian education over the past fifty years. I accept from the beginning that the debate about standards (for that is what 'dumbing down' is about) is a rich one. This essay is intended as a contribution to that debate, not as a kind of closure.



Don Aitkin is the recently retired Vice-Chancellor of the University of Canberra.

It is plain at once that 'dumbing down' is a critical term: someone is doing something bad to someone else. What is happening, and who are the actors? While my first encounter with the phrase a year or two ago was Australian, the term has an American ring. The Internet is a great source for American catch phrases, but my search engine produced a truly embarrassing richness: more than 32,000 references. The first hundred of them, however, made clear what further search was only to confirm. The phrase is amazingly popular, but the stock of arguments is quite small. The positions and arguments are inter-connected, and all of them possess sadness, nostalgia and a kind of bitterness or anger. I set them out in the order of descending generality.

How the Term Dumbing Down is Used

The first is a strong critique of contemporary Western civilisation, whose people live in a 'moronic inferno' characterised by trivia, sensation-seeking and drugs. Problems are too hard, and people have retreated from

trying to solve them into a kind of numbness. The system can be described as a 'dumbocracy', the rule of cleverness without wisdom, and its evils can be seen in all walks of life (Mosley, 2000 is an example).

The second is a version of this position that excoriates the mass media and finds them wanting and therefore responsible. According to critics in this domain, television, radio and the newspapers have abandoned serious news and challenging artistic programs for a safe, sugary 'infotainment' world that does not offend advertisers and keeps viewers/listeners/readers in a mentally dormant condition. Movies are similarly dumb, because they're made for dumb moviegoers who get restless if they are asked to see anything challenging. Museums are becoming dumb because the interactive and digital accompaniments designed to attract people, it is alleged, actually inhibit thinking.

The third provides a possible 'design' of this state of affairs. Charlotte Iserbyt's (1999) *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America* points the way. Here the plotters are 'reformists' and 'do-gooders' who have interfered with the American education system, replacing rigour with warm, fuzzy and mushy stuff. She is not alone. Similar critiques abound, though not all the plotters are seen to be on the left. There is a strain of anti-capitalist, anti-corporation sentiment in all this, too, the argument being that corporations simply want a nation of docile consumers, and the deplored changes to the education system are intended to achieve such an outcome. Another group thinks that it is governments who are responsible, because they want to regulate everyone, and are therefore interested in people not being able to make decisions for themselves.

The fourth provides particular contexts for such a general attack. Teachers don't have 'real' learning to acquire any more, but are fed courses on 'diversity'. Widening access (to schools, colleges, universities, professions) must lead to a decline in quality. Sermons in church are now soft and mushy, and congregations are not forced to think and reflect. Fewer Americans are able to converse in other languages, or to count, or to undertake physics, or to do whatever the critic thinks is important, than was once the case, than would be ideal, etc. More people believe in the healing power of crystals, pyramids, copper bands, and so on and fewer in real medicine (or in God's word).

The fifth is a specific attack on what are seen as falling standards, the cause or root of the changes already referred to. Any example of a new standard is likely to be attacked as a 'fallen' standard, and to be an example of dumbing down. In a splendid British example, a slight increase in the proportion of A-level results in high school exit examinations was seen as a disaster by critics (an obvious sign that standards had slipped) and as a great success by defenders (an obvious sign that standards were rising).

The sixth is about the decline of skill, and is reminiscent of Harry Braverman's (1974) lament in *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the 20th Century*. What makes this theme most interesting is that the skill being highlighted is computing. There are continuing debates about the cost in skill utilisation of so-called 'user friendly' personal computers, continued Non-exposure to which is said to lead to a loss of programming skills. How dumb does a web-site have to be to attract sufficient hits to make it worthwhile, asks a complainant in an adjacent field of endeavour. No one wants to have to do hard work any more, a lament echoed elsewhere in these conversations.

Australian References

Australian references appear from time to time, and by adding 'Australia' as a descriptor you can find them all together. By doing so you lose much of the paranoid flavour, and of course the plainly American material. There's nothing about UFOs, either. (For those who don't immediately see the connection, it is claimed that governments have dumbed down the population so that people don't ask about unidentified flying objects, preferring to believe government reassurances that there aren't aliens, UFOs and the like.) A striking characteristic of the Australian material is the frequency with which 'dumbing down' appears in the sub-head or title of the article or story, even though it was not a major element in the text. My guess is that sub-editors find it a catchy phrase to use, and employ it even when the main message is about something else.

An Australian example is 'The Dumbing Down of Australian Professions', by Padraic P. McGuinness, which appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 15 April 2000. It begins 'Why are our teachers so stupid? Why are our doctors so silly?' These opening questions are not followed, as you might expect, by examples of stupidity or silliness; that is simply taken for granted. The explanation offered by McGuinness is the democratisation of tertiary education started by R. G. Menzies in the 1950s, which produced the first great wave of expansion in higher education, and the indifference of the Whitlam Government to quality control, which took the brakes off thereafter. Once upon a time teaching 'creamed off the best of the working-class and poor school students, and for some time we had what was probably one of the best teaching services in the world'. Now what we have are 'tenured

mediocrities and failures' in our schools and universities, and 'a medical profession full of academically intelligent but ill-educated, ill-read and bored GPs'.

I would agree that this is not Paddy McGuinness at his best, but the 'dumbing down' of Australia is a steady theme of his, in *Quadrant*, of which he is the current editor, as well as in his newspaper essays. The article exemplifies a good deal of the material that appears under the heading of 'dumbing down'. To begin with, there is no evidence or example of the failings being criticised. It is as though it is all so obvious that there is no need to do anything other than utter the magic words. (In fact, McGuinness does not use the phrase 'dumbing down' in the body of his text; its use in the title may well be the work of a sub-editor.) In none of the articles that I have read has there been any worked-out account of the process through which a society is supposed to have become dumbed down. The argument is rarely more than 'Once that, now this. Woe!' And of course the decline is usually somebody's fault.

Next is a firm assumption, or set of assumptions, about the way the world really is or ought to be. Such assumptions usually have to be inferred, because they too are not spelled out. In McGuinness's case what we see is the old IQ assertion: only a small proportion of the community is intelligent enough to benefit from high school or university education. Any expansion of the system must reduce quality, because there aren't enough 'bright' people to do the work that only such bright people can do.

A partner of this assumption is the view that life is tough, and that education systems should reflect this reality. *Dumbing Down Our Kids* by Charles Sykes (1996) contains a set of rules for life that have been widely circulated by fax and email. Some of them are:

Rule 1 Life is not fair; get used to it.

Rule 2 The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself...

Rule 4 If you think your teacher is tough, wait till you get a boss. He doesn't have tenure...

Rule 8 Your school may have done away with winners and losers but life has not. In some schools they have abolished failing grades, they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This, of course, bears not the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.

The McGuinness essay also lacks much sense of time or any sense of scale. Yes, he does refer to a past and describes it. To be fair to him, the great majority of the articles I've read did not — it was assumed that we all knew about that. It is not obvious from the article, however, that McGuinness thinks it important that the Australia of 1947 contained 7.5 million people, that of 1982 had 15 million, and that of today has passed 19 million. Wouldn't these increases have had an effect? Was no expansion of education necessary? It's as though societies are static, or frozen.

I don't really need to defend Australia (or the USA or Britain) from the charge that it is dumber than it used to be, and/or that some named or nameless persons have accomplished such an outcome or are endeavouring to do so. A few minutes' thought, and some comparison with the past, will make such a proposition implausible if not preposterous. The Guardian (London) devoted three issues to the proposition in November 2000 and came to the conclusion that it was simply rubbish. The reverse was true — on the evidence society was 'clevering up', and if this was a problem to 'the angry old men of the dumbing down debate' (Madeleine Bunting, Guardian, 13 November 2000), they would just have to get used to it. I would argue that the Australian evidence points in the same direction, and could amass a stack of data. Alas, the data are usually dismissed by critics as irrelevant. A great deal does depend on what we mean.

Understand What Is Being Assailed

So it does seem to me to be worth trying to understand what is being assailed, and why, and what can be said about it. I can remember taking my youngest child to a parent-teacher night for kindergarten in 1987 and discovering myself in a fight between tough-minded and tender-minded parents about what school was really for. These are matters about which people do feel strongly, and about which Ministers inevitably have to form views. Not only that, people who have invested a lot of time and effort in something expected to get a return for it: if you are a programmer, for example, user-friendly machines may well make you feel that your livelihood is imperilled.

Let me set out the educational expansion of the last fifty years or so in Australia as factually as I can, and then reflect what meanings may be derived from it all. At the end of the second world war most Australian children did not complete high school, and only a very small proportion (2 per cent of my age group in 1954) went to university. High schools were relatively scarce, and staffed for the most part by teachers who had university degrees in the areas they professed. Those schools were also highly disciplined, teachers had authority and status within their communities, not simply in the classroom, and pupils wore uniforms prescribed by the school, whether they were in public, Catholic or Protestant schools.

Today the university system is twenty times larger than it was; there is a high school in almost every Australian town, a little more than 70 per cent of children complete high school, which is not as disciplined an environment as it once was, and most Year 12 students expect to go to university. Three engines drove the expansion of tertiary education. The first was the need to increase skill levels in the workforce. The second was political pressure from parents wishing their children to have a more enjoyable working life than the one they knew (and reasoning that education was the necessary escalator). Third, and not least, was the outsourcing of professional training by the professions and the highly

skilled white-collar occupations from the workplace to the university. Human knowledge (that is to say, what academics define as 'knowledge') has multiplied around fifty times since the end of the second world war. Specialism abounds. There is a continual cry for a new breed of generalists and synthesisers, but it is vastly more difficult to be a generalist in the early 21st century than it was in the early 20th. There is just so much more to know and more to synthesise.

These broad changes have led to others at the more personal level. For example, today's children can expect to spend most of the first thirty years of their lives in serious education. There is just so much more to learn. Most of the occupations that people have today did not exist in 1947, and most of the occupations people had in 1947 no longer exist or have been radically transformed. The school curriculum is actually rather more conservative than the workplace, but it too has undergone great change. Today's young women will on average have their first babies at 27, and will have, again on average, only 1.7 of them. The generation of 1947 was more fecund and started baby production earlier. Divorce was difficult and uncommon in 1947; it is neither today. The churches were much more powerful in 1947, there was much more of a single morality, at least in public, and Australia was a much more solidary, ethnically homogenous society. Not everyone liked this latter state of affairs. Some left Australia altogether because of what they saw as intolerance and an excessive need for conformity. Others became rebels. Others worked hard to push society's norms into a more progressive stance.

It should not be surprising that some people find not to their taste the changes from then to now (and the counterpart changes in the USA and Britain). It should be no less surprising that some people will find today's society and its context more threatening than the earlier society that they remember. I would generally agree with those who argue that today's Australia lacks a sense of purpose or mission comparable with that of the 1950s and 1960s, and I think that missing element does affect the attitudes of many young people to life. The urge to condemn, and to construct a 'decline and fall' picture, will for some people be a strong one. I could construct one myself if I let go of my historian's feeling for balance. I could, for example, complain that no one these days seems to know how to use the apostrophe properly, whereas in my day we were taught the parsing and analysis of English sentences and exactly when and where to use the apostrophe. What on earth has happened to language, I could thunder. What do the schools think they're doing? And so on.

But balance reminds me that only the A classes gave much attention to the niceties of English grammar and syntax, and that we (I include Paddy McGuinness here, much my age and no less well educated) made up a small proportion of a small proportion. I need to remind myself that around half of the Australian people today

were either born overseas or are the children of parents, one of whom at least was born overseas. English is a second language for many of them, and the English language is itself evolving. I would be prepared to wager that most people in my days didn't know where to put the apostrophe either, but they did not have to use written English much in their jobs, so they weren't caught out.

Maybe the apostrophe is on the way out. The Germans use a final 's' as a possessive, as we do, but they don't use an apostrophe to separate it from the noun. Whatever else has happened in the last fifty years, there is no doubt that much greater proportions of Australians communicate within our society than was once the case, in text as well as in pictures.

If I return to the themes at the beginning of this essay, I have to say that I thought that the expansion of education would have had a much more powerful beneficial effect than it appears to have had in the areas of radio and television. Parents today worry about the evil effects of television; mine were adamant that comics would rot our minds. On the bright side, newspapers are a lot better than they were in the 1950s, and having around 3 million university-educated people in our population has raised the general levels of discussion, argument and confidence of public debate. If you don't think so, I invite you to read the Hansards of the early 1950s or the newspapers of that time. Nonetheless, there is still a good deal of the 'bread and circuses' mentality in our culture. I wish there wasn't as much as there is, but I balance against it the wonderful advances there are in music, the creative arts, theatre and literature.

Like the critics, there are times when I want to argue that it is time that some people accepted that hard work generally precedes lasting success and achievement. When I say such things I have to avert my eyes from the people who make lots of money by pushing other money around, or by owning companies that exploit a monopoly situation of one kind or another. There are times when I want the acceptance of responsibility rather than the demand for rights. And there are times when I wonder whose fault it is that Australia is not the way I would like it to be, and who allowed it to get this way. I don't go far down this track because I can see that it is the generation of my parents and the generation of which I am a part (and indeed Paddy McGuinness is a part), to which much of the blame has to be levelled for whatever shortcomings are seen.

So I look at the brighter side, the sheer exuberance, curiosity, tolerance, creativity and hard work of contemporary Australia, and reflect that maybe we didn't do so bad a job, all things considered. Because I work in the education business, I know quite a lot about changes in curricula, the entry into the university of new professions, like medicine in the 19th century, and education in the early 20th, and law finally becoming respectable by sidelining the admission boards, and

accounting making it in, and then nursing, and computing and tourism and public relations; even journalism. There'll be new professions as the new century advances, and people will sneer about them too. The notion that some areas of knowledge are not really suited to university study is much affected by the location of the person making the judgement, as I have observed over almost half a century of work in higher education. A good deal of the clamour, I think, is about status.

'Twas Ever Thus

There are those who argue that today's nurses don't know how to fluff a pillow, or that today's journalism graduates don't know how to make it in the real world, or that today's doctors are over-trained, or that those who can do and those who can't teach. 'Twas ever thus. One of my tasks for the Leaving Certificate in 1953 was to work my way through Cicero's *De Senectute*, a reflection on old age written by Cicero in his last years. I don't recall the Latin now, and couldn't translate it, but Cicero knew a thing or two. One wise observation of his was that life was always better some time ago, and another that sooner or later people told you as great discoveries things that you had known when you were young. Reading about dumbing down reminded me that I did get something of substance from all those long periods in Latin.

And that takes me to standards. I'm actually glad that I learned Latin, because I became a writer, and Latin (along with the French and German I learned at the same time) has been very useful to me as a writer of English. But I couldn't suggest that because it was good for me it should be compulsory for everyone else. It once was, of course. In the 19th century it was the basis of entrance into university. Once any writer of quality would quote from the Bible and expect his readers to recognise the reference. At another time writers would interrupt their flow with a bow to 'the immortal Bard/the poet/the blind singer' and put down a couplet. Again, they knew their readers would know whom they meant and why it was relevant. Do that today and no one much would know what you were talking about. That is not, in my view, because standards have slipped, but because each generation has its own canons, icons and reference points, and their status changes all the time.

University campuses echo with the laments of falling standards. I can remember Henry Rosovsky telling us in the late 1970s that the proportion of A grades in Harvard College had doubled since 1945. The inference was that standards had slipped. But maybe the students of the 1970s worked harder. I'd be prepared to bet that the students of today do. In any case, Howard Gardner's powerful *Frames of Mind* (1983 and many later editions) gave me the neurophysiological and educational explanation of why it was that all my life I had seen the numbers of people going to university increase and labour there successfully. The truth is that we are all intelligent, across a number of dimensions (Gardner

says 8½), and it is love, encouragement, motivation and preparation that distinguish us in the ways we benefit from our native gifts. Those who see dumbing down around them need to read Gardner, but it is a fair bet that they haven't and won't.

Entering students aren't prepared as well as they used, to be in mathematics, or physics, or English, or history, or whatever, comes another complaint. Built into this lament is the assumption that schools are there to prepare students for university. I used to think so too, but now I see that outcome as just one of the tasks schools are expected to undertake. My father, a maths teacher in high school for much of his working life, once pointed out to me that there were just so many hours in the school day, and if I wanted something inserted into the curriculum I would need to suggest what should be dropped. Some of the critics of dumbing down have a ready answer: 'Concentrate on the three Rs!' they will cry. Every now and then, looking at yet another poorly spelled sign or an advertisement with an 'it's' horribly rendered, I sympathise. But we're long past that.

The schools have to fit into the curriculum a lot that wasn't there in my day. I went to good high schools and was well taught in them, but I learned no Australian history and no social science of any kind, my history stopped at 1900, computing skills were unheard of, we did virtually no oral work at all except in languages, we knew nothing about the world, and learned nothing at all about sex save behind the dunnies (and that was in parts ludicrously incorrect). Preparation for work? You're joking. We were streamed at an early age, and the choices were final and exclusive. Once you were on the science side or the arts side that was that, and streaming started at about age 12. Today's schools have an unenviable job, because apart from everything else they have become the dumping place for the education that children used to get (or not get) at home but for which today's busy parents do not have time. But in 2002 we have a lot more choice. Not only do kids have much more choice than was once the case, but so do their parents.

There is a much greater variety of schooling contexts available today than there ever used to be. If you want it, it's there somewhere.

To insist that there are defined standards and that everyone must abide by them is a really fine piece of arrogance, one that assumes the standards preferred by the speaker must be those chosen by any right-thinking person. In fact, the diversity of our society and the increased levels of confidence possessed by its citizens mean that there is considerable diversity in the standards preferred by them. I would agree that if there is too much diversity then it may be hard to see what holds our society together other than propinquity. But a single set of standards is a cast back to the kind of

totalitarian regimes that the great majority of those opposed to dumbing down would reject at once. I'm afraid that diversity rules, OK?

Finally, there is the worry about de-skilling, the dumbing down of the workforce, and the loss of knowledge. Braverman saw the Taylorist mode of industrial production as having denuded craft workers of their skills and created an unskilled working class that was alienated and without pride. But in industry after industry, most notably the automobile industry, robots are replacing the workers who knew only how many wheel nuts to screw on and how quickly to perform that task. Today's workforce is all about skill, and the investment in workers is many times what it used to be. One consequence is that there are fewer workers in industry, another that hardly won skills do not have the shelf life they once had. The flight engineer who monitored the four propeller-driving engines of the DC-6 and the Constellation had only a fifteen-year career. Jet engines, simple and reliable, replaced the old radials, and they required no engineers or monitoring. The shift from the large mainframe to the desktop PC displaced thousands of skilled workers, and the shift from the PC to the pocket-sized Palm and its counterparts will displace thousands more. My guess is that any serious study of skills and deskilling over time would show that the process of de-skilling and re-skilling is one that all human societies have known. There are more or less humane ways of controlling the process, but the notion that we can somehow prevent it seems almost ludicrous to me.

There seems to be no end to the technological changes to which we are subject, and all of them mean that we have to keep on refining our knowledge and learning new skills. To do so all the time is tiring and frustrating, but it can also be stimulating and a continued affirmation of life. Of course, there is an alternative. We can sit on our little pile of accumulated knowledge, pretend that it's everything, and cry 'dumbing down!' about the others when we see ourselves being passed by. That seems pretty sad to me.

References

- Braverman, H. (1974), *Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the 20th Century*, Monthly Review Press, New York.
- Gardner H. (1983), *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, Basic Books, New York. Non-Agenda 96
- Iserbyt, C. (1999), *The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America — A Chronological Paper Trail*, 3D Research Co., Bath, ME.
- Mosley, I. (ed.) (2000), *Dumbing Down: Culture, Politics and the Mass Media*, Imprint Academic, Thorverton UK.
- Sykes, C. (1996), *Dumbing Down Our Kids: Why American Children Feel Good About Themselves but Can't Read, Write, or Add*, St. Martin's Griffin, New York.
- The author gratefully acknowledges the benefit of the comments of two anonymous referees.

I will never ever complain about my job again!

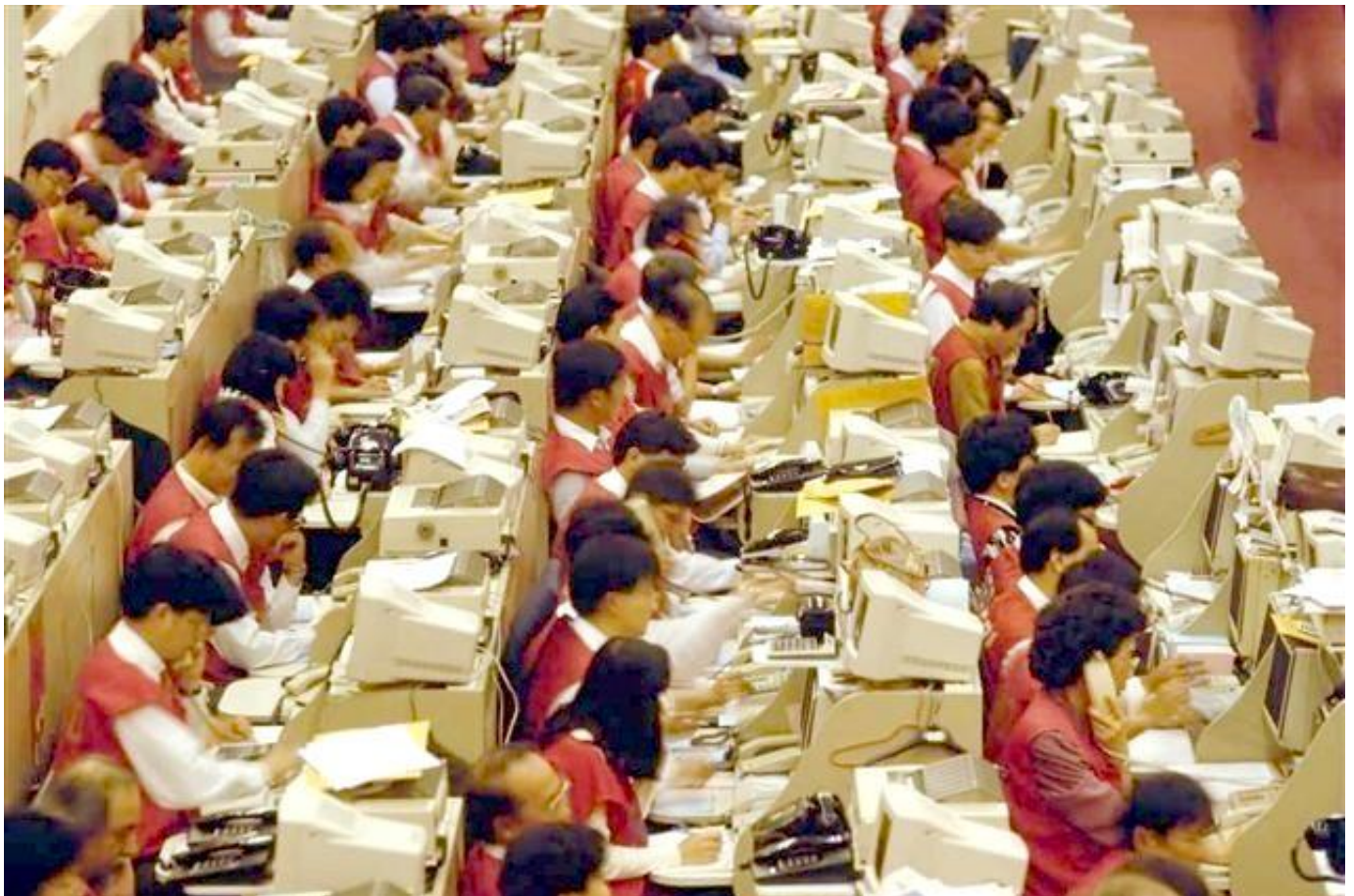






viktor

Photo by Vincent Laforet / The New York Times





Orwell 2012

August 21, 2012 | Author: [Eric Hunt](#)

War Is Peace Diversity is Strength Resistance is Hate

Was Treblinka a transit camp on the way to Beverly Hills?

August 20, 2012 | Author: [Eric Hunt](#)

Update – 4th Beverly Hills “Treblinka survivor” located!

In addition to the two [Treblinka transitees](#) *who aren't supposed to exist* according to the official story about Treblinka being a “Pure Extermination Camp”, yet wound up in Beverly Hills (the most expensive place to live in America), I need to add [Fred Kort](#)

Peter Black, senior historian for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., has said that Kort was one of only about 15 people from the camp who survived the war.

I also need to add [Isadore Helfing](#), a Treblinka “survivor” who tells some of the most horrific stories every imagined. He apparently survived Treblinka and died in Beverly Hills.

Rabbi Black says that only 15 Jews survived Treblinka. Here's 4 who wound up in Beverly Hills. What are the odds?

Additional reading:

<http://www.holocaustdenier.com/if-they-werent-gassed-where-were-treblinka-jews-transited-to-beverly-hills/>

<http://www.holocaustdenier.com/there-was-no-selection-process-at-treblinka/>

Holohoax Survivors Who Tell The Truth – Over 100,000 Hits!

August 19, 2012 | Author: [Eric Hunt](#)

A revisionist extracted a segment from my documentary *The Last Days of the Big Lie* and uploaded it to YouTube. They named the segment “Holohoax Survivors Who Tell The Truth”.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xm8UmMuRSSw>

This segment now has over 100,000 hits!

Spielberg's cabal doesn't want you to see these “survivor” interviews. That's why they [banned me from Stanford University](#) after sharing these, along with Irene Zisblatt's criminal “testimony” with the world.

“Holohoax Survivors Who Tell the Truth” has really hit a nerve. It's shocking to hear Auschwitz inmates tell about their elaborate stage, with curtain rings and a grand piano, where they had plays and other musical performances. It's shocking to see video of children in Theresenstadt juxtaposed with a woman telling about costumed children's plays, in their Auschwitz block, with beautiful murals painted on the walls. According to the official Holocaust narrative, all children were immediately gassed upon arrival.

“Testimony” such as this is extremely important to cast doubt on the “factory of death” Holocaust promoters push.

Auschwitz and Buchenwald inmates speak about being paid for their work in special currency, using their currency in camp cantinas and at the camp movie theater, receiving and sending postcards, and playing in well organized soccer tournaments.

See for yourself! To to celebrate the 100,000th view, I uploaded a higher quality version of this segment.

Feel free to upload this video to YouTube and elsewhere.

You can download it here

<http://archive.org/details/HolohoaxSurvivorsWhoTellTheTruth>

Calls for federal law to criminalise racial abuse

Dan Harrison - *Indigenous Affairs and Social Affairs Correspondent, August 30, 2012*

AUSTRALIA should consider criminalising racial vilification under federal law, the Race Discrimination Commissioner, Helen Szoke, has said. The indigenous leader Les Malezer recently called for the nation to make racial vilification a criminal offence under federal law, as it was required to under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which Australia signed in 1975.

In response, a spokeswoman for the federal Attorney-General, Nicola Roxon, said the government was not contemplating changes to racial vilification laws. However, the federal government has committed to review its reservation to this part of the convention. Speaking at the National Press Club in Canberra yesterday, Dr Szoke said the issue deserved serious consideration. "I think it's time we actually looked at that," she said.

Currently under federal law, the victims of racial vilification can seek civil redress. Last year, the Federal Court found the conservative newspaper columnist Andrew Bolt in breach of the Racial Discrimination Act for a 2009 article in which he accused fair-skinned Aboriginals of playing up their indigenous heritage to advance their careers. Racial vilification is a criminal offence under state law in NSW and Victoria, but prosecutions are rare. Britain is one of the nations that has criminalised racial vilification.

Asked about the Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's promise to amend anti-discrimination law to narrow the definition of racial vilification, Dr Szoke said it was important to retain protections

against race hate. Mr Abbott has argued the laws in their current form infringe free speech. But Dr Szoke said most human rights were not absolute. "This is particularly so in relation to freedom of speech," she said. "My right to freedom of speech should not extend to racial hatred."



"My right to freedom of speech should not extend to racial hatred" ... Federal Race Discrimination Commissioner Helen Szoke. Photo: Craig Abraham

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/calls-for-federal-law-to-criminalise-racial-abuse-20120829-2512p.html#ixzz25GWII1iK>

BREAKING NEWS:

From: Marc Lemire marc@lemire.com, Wednesday, 17 October 2012 2:09 PM

Charges Stayed against Terry Tremaine for alleged violation of lifetime speech ban issued by "Human Rights" Tribunal

<http://blog.freedomsite.org/2012/10/breaking-charges-stayed-against-terry.html>

News is now just breaking that a Sask court has tossed out the contempt motion brought by Serial plaintiff Richard Warman and the Canadian 'Human Rights' Commission against Terry Tremaine. The CHRC and Warman were seeking to have Tremaine found guilty of violating a lifetime speech ban issued by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal back in 2009.

The lifetime speech ban was issued under the notorious [Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act](#).

A completely discredited piece of legislation, which has been found unconstitutional by the [Canadian Human Rights Tribunal in the Lemire case](#), and repealed by Parliament.

Can you imagine the nerve of trying to throw someone in jail for violating an order from a now unconstitutional and soon to be fully repealed piece of legislation? Some might call the CHRC vindictive for doing such a thing...

Terry Tremaine no longer facing charges over alleged online activity - [CBC News](#), Oct 16, 2012 6:05 PM CST

A Regina judge has stayed a charge against Terry Tremaine, who was accused of continuing to post hate speech online in defiance of an order from the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

In 2007, the commission ordered Tremaine to stop posting anti-Jewish material on the internet. In 2009, Richard Warman — who initiated the complaint against Tremaine — said in an affidavit that [Tremaine is disobeying the order](#) and was, at that time, continuing to post material that advocates the extermination of the Jewish community and also attacks blacks and other non-whites. With a stay of proceedings, Tremaine is no longer before the courts over the allegation of disobeying the commission's order.

See full article at:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/story/2012/10/16/sk-tremaine-charges-stayed-121016.html>

Israel commends EU new 'important' sanctions

Israel praised the EU for widening its sanctions against Iran on Monday, as foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor heralded the latest economic measures for not letting Iran off the hook.

16 October 2012 - Last updated 12:48PM

The latest sanctions, Europe's most unequivocal statement to the Islamist Republic to date that time is not limitless for diplomacy, were definitely an important step that sends the right and strong message to the Tehran regime, Palmor added.

On the eve of their monthly meeting in Luxembourg, Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman had urged EU ministers to make the right decision on increasing sanctions, insisting that it was critical in order to pass the right message, which is that the

West has enough will and determination to stop the Iranian efforts to destabilise the world.

Failure to act in this respect, he argued, will bring us to the brink of a new reality similar to that which existed in the 1930s, when the West erred, and instead of strangling the Nazi regime at the outset, decided to compromise and appease Hitler.



Photo: Foreign ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor

Despite apparently leaked reports by Israel's foreign ministry suggested Sweden was planning to veto proposals to implement further sanctions on Iran, which would scupper its success which required unanimity from all 27 Council members, a new package of measures was approved, extending the reach of sanctions to including the shipping industry, as well as the export of materials to Iran that could be used in its contested nuclear and ballistic programs.

Israel's fears of European inaction on Iran were likely to be alleviated by the general change in tone by European leaders on arrival in Luxembourg, as German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle told reporters Iran was still playing for time. We don't see a sufficient readiness for substantial talks about the nuclear program, he added.

Meanwhile his British counterpart William Hague's assertion that pressure would mount on the regime over the coming

months unless negotiations succeed, was further emphasised by Prime Minister David Cameron's address to the annual dinner of the United Jewish Israel Appeal in London on Monday. He refuted Iranian claims its nuclear programme was for purely peaceful purposes as not remotely credible. But, he insisted, sanctions had begun to work in slowing the nuclear development process, adding that we need the courage to give these sanctions time to work.

Another key ally of Israel in Europe, the Netherlands, declared it was not acceptable that Iran still does not meet its international obligations. Until the moment that they do, we will have to continue to increase the pressure, continued Dutch ambassador to Israel Caspar Veldkamp.

Despite increased assertiveness from individual European member states, EU foreign policy Catherine Ashton was more guarded in her statements at a press conference following Monday's meeting, insisting only that if you belong to the international community and you're part of a treaty, an agreement, you also have a responsibility to make sure it is upheld. And therefore, we do have that responsibility to put the pressure on, and the pressure is a way of saying we want you to comply, we want you to take your obligations seriously and we will continue that pressure.

On arrival in Luxembourg, Ashton said it was imperative the international community proceeded with the twin track approach: pressure to persuade Iran to come to the table, and the offers that we make about how we will release that pressure in return for Iran complying with international obligations. That's what the twin track approach is about and you need that.

Source: [EJPress](http://www.eju.org/news/israel/israel-commends-eu-new-important-sanctions)

<http://www.eju.org/news/israel/israel-commends-eu-new-important-sanctions>

David Hicks terrorism conviction could be overturned

By: Gemma Jones, Bryan Littlely, News Limited Network, October 17, 2012 9:40AM

US Appeals Court throws out bin Laden driver's conviction

Decision could pave way for Hicks to be exonerated

It's 'bloody brilliant', says Hicks's father

DAVID Hicks could have his terrorism conviction overturned after a US Appeals Court decision in Washington overnight which has thrown out the conviction of another man who was Osama Bin Laden's driver.

Salim Hamdan's case in which the charge of material support of terrorism, which was introduced in 2006, was rejected when applied retrospectively means [David Hicks'](#) conviction on the same charge could now also be in doubt. The court also found material support of terrorism was not a war crime.

Hicks' lawyer Dan Mori told the ABC this morning that the Adelaide-born man, who was captured in Afghanistan in December, 2001, and charged with providing support for terrorism, could have his conviction thrown out following the ruling.

"It [the charge of material support for terrorism] is null and void for conduct prior to 2006," Mr Mori said. "It is showing that what they set up was ineffective. They were trying to set up an ad hoc process after the fact instead of using the Federal Court system in the US that has been trying terrorism cases for years before and worked effectively. Unfortunately the military commission system was set up and it was rushed, and not very effectively, so now we see the problems with it. The foundation is rotten and the house is starting to crumble. I think it would be great for some official recognition that what he was put through was not fair and was not just," he said. I think that this

court decision supports that position and hopefully it will act as some catalyst to getting some real closure and clearing his name officially."

Mr Mori said it was up to Hicks and his new legal team to pursue the matter.

But Hicks is unaware that he can claim to be an innocent man, his father says. His Adelaide-based father, Terry, said his son is uncontactable at the moment.

"I think it is bloody brilliant," Mr Hicks said of the news. At this point in time, I'm not sure what step (David) will take ... he would not know about the decision yet. He has other things going on at present. He has been up and down a number of times over the years and he goes through a lot of pain and suffering."

Mr Hicks maintained that David had never been given a fair trial and in his eyes was innocent until he could face a "proper court system. I suppose if David's name is legally cleared that makes me feel a lot better," he told the ABC. "It will make David feel a lot better, and I think the people that have supported David over the years, they will be able to put their hands up and say, 'This is what we have all been working for'. 'It's starting out to be a good day. 'Once you start using retrospective laws, it all becomes illegal."

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/david-hicks-conviction-could-be-overturned/story-fndo317g-1226497535585>